



*City of Burlington
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NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release

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ELON UNIVERSITY RELEASES PRELIMINARY CITIZEN SATISFACTION SURVEY RESULTS

BURLINGTON, NORTH CAROLINA – Elon University released preliminary citizen satisfaction survey results. Please see the attached report from Dr. Betty Morgan, Director Elon Center for Public Affairs.

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For more information, please contact Jennifer Smith, Public Information Officer – City of Burlington (336) 222-5076.

May 11, 2006

To: Harold Owen, City Manager
Burlington, North Carolina

From: Dr. Betty Morgan, Director
Elon Center for Public Affairs

Re: 2006 Citizen Satisfaction Survey—Preliminary Results

In an effort to keep you informed on our progress, to date, on the survey, I wanted to provide some very preliminary descriptive statistics which may prove interesting to you as we wait for the more complete analysis of the data to be completed Fall Semester. Please note that these are early, indicator data, only, and that we will learn much more as the analysis progresses. We will make a full written report and offer a presentation of the data, (likely in November) when our analysis is more developed. For the moment, this interim briefing is intended to highlight obvious observations that can be drawn from strictly descriptive statistics.

1. Goals and Accomplishments

This has been an admirable, courageous, and conscientious engagement in providing the citizens of Burlington the opportunity to participate, in a tangible way, in the decision making processes which guide both elected and administrative officials. I would like to commend the Council for their vision, and foresight in supporting the survey and I hope that we can continue, into the future, to offer the opportunity to residents on a more routine basis. This has been an educational process for everyone involved and we look forward to continuing to involve the citizens of Burlington, routinely, in this very important endeavor.

Our stated goals for the project were:

- To provide a vehicle for public participation
- To identify public opinions on relevant issues
- To identify public satisfaction with current service levels
- To provide public awareness data
- To identify program or policy alternatives

The data clearly indicate that the project has succeeded in accomplishing each of these goals as the following specific categories illustrate.

2. Participation and Return Rate

When I met with the Council at their retreat in May I was asked what I projected the return rate to be given our delivery system and collection methodology. I had predicted, at that time, a response rate of approximately 3% to 5%. In fact, our response rate is very nearly 4% (3.8%) which is precisely within the range we had anticipated prior to the survey. We have entered data for all the surveys collected and we are working with an overall N of 834 respondents. Responses are well distributed geographically (Section 1, 15.1% ; Section 2, 24.7%; Section 3 17.7%; and Section 4 20.0) and the demographic breakdown of respondents was quite balanced given Census data breakdowns of population.. 3% of respondents were Asian, 6.8% of respondents were Hispanic, 56.8% were White, 11.8% were African American, .7% were Native American (97% of surveys returned were completed in English. There is much more to be learned from further analysis of this demographic data and much more to be said at the Fall briefing session.

3. Preliminary Results: General Categories

Overall, respondents to the survey are very positive in their assessment of Burlington as a good place to live. 71.6% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that Burlington is a good place to live. 70% of respondents report that the quality of life in Burlington is good to excellent and 69.2% of respondents answered that Burlington is a good or excellent place to raise children. Most impressively, 80% of respondents indicate that they feel they receive good value for taxes paid and nearly 77% responded that they are pleased with the City's overall direction. While there is much analytical work yet to be done to fully develop this category of results, the early indications are that the City of Burlington is very positively regarded in the eyes of its citizenry.

4. Preliminary Results: Operating Departments

While space considerations preclude a full assessment of every service indicator explored in the survey, there are some notable observations to be made, even at this very preliminary stage. Across the range of operational departments citizens report high levels of satisfaction with contact (access), response, and performance variables. Of particular significance, more than 73% of respondents are satisfied or extremely satisfied with their contacts with the Solid Waste Collection service. Findings for other departments are strongly positive and further examination of the data will offer more insights into service perceptions.

5. Overall Impressions

While it is too early to make specific observations or to categorize any observations as positive or negative, necessarily, it must be said that the overall data appear to indicate a widespread general satisfaction with and appreciation of Burlington's government, governmental officials, and general policy direction. It

is an impressive set of data indicating satisfaction with service responsiveness, provision of amenities such as Recreation and Parks, and with overall policy goals. For example, 72.4% of those surveyed responded that they agree with the City's Policy on Employer Incentives.

6. In the interest of full disclosure

It is fair to note that there are some categories of data which seem to indicate patterns of underutilization (52% of respondents have never used the City's web site for information or business reasons and 52.8% of respondents indicate that they would not want to pay water bills on line) some additional service provision to be considered for the future (for instance, 56.5% want electrical devices picked up as part of the waste collection service) and some communication challenges (71.5% of respondents report that the NEVER watch "At Your Service" and 54.1% of respondents are not aware of Advisory Board Opportunities). In any endeavor to identify problems or challenges, as the public perceives them, we intend to make these issues visible—in order to conscientiously undertake to address the problems. However, it must be said that overall, the positive findings far outweigh the problems identified and the benefits of collecting this "snapshot" of citizen satisfaction have been important to all concerned. While we are just beginning to scratch the surface of the information to be gained from the project, it is important to take note of the very impressive preliminary results and to encourage your office, and the council to support our continuing efforts to help inform decision making in the community.

I hope you will find this update useful, and informative. We look forward to presenting our complete report later this year.

Dr. Betty Morgan, Director
Elon Center for Public Affairs.